PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY REPORT ON PATENTABILITY

(Chapter II of the Patent Cooperation Treaty)

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference P23816PCAU	**FOR FURTHER ACTION**	See Form PCT/IPEA/416
International application No. **PCT**/AU2005/000304	International filing date *(day/month/year)* 3 March 2005	Priority date *(day/month/year)* 3 March 2004

International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC

Int. Cl.

A63F 13/10 (2006.01) ***G07F 17/34*** (2006.01)

Applicant

STARGAMES CORPORATION PTY LIMITED et al

1. This report is the international preliminary examination report, established by this International Preliminary Examining Authority under Article 35 and transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.
2. This REPORT consists of a total of 3 sheets, including this cover sheet.
3. This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, comprising:
   a. [X] *(sent to the applicant and to the International Bureau)* a total of **6** sheets, as follows:
      [X] sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications authorized by this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions).
      [ ] sheets which supersede earlier sheets, but which this Authority considers contain an amendment that goes beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed, as indicated in item 4 of Box No. I and the Supplemental Box.
   b. [ ] *(sent to the International Bureau only)* a total of (indicate type and number of electronic carrier(s)) , containing a sequence listing and/or table related thereto, in electronic form only, as indicated in the Supplemental Box Relating to Sequence Listing (see Section 802 of the Administrative Instructions).
4. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

[X]	Box No. I	Basis of the report
[ ]	Box No. II	Priority
[ ]	Box No. III	Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
[ ]	Box No. IV	Lack of unity of invention
[X]	Box No. V	Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
[ ]	Box No. VI	Certain documents cited
[ ]	Box No. VII	Certain defects in the international application
[ ]	Box No. VIII	Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 15 August 2005	Date of completion of this report 27 January 2006
Name and mailing address of the IPEA/AU AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA E-mail address: pct@ipaustralia.gov.au Facsimile No. (02) 6285 3929	Authorized Officer **ROSEMARY LONGSTAFF** Telephone No. (02) 6283 2637

[redacted] **INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY REPORT ON PATENTABILITY**

International application No.
PCT/AU2005/000304

Box No. I Basis of the report

1. With regard to the **language,** this report is based on:

[X] The international application in the language in which it was filed

[ ] A translation of the international application into , which is the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of:

[ ] international search (under Rules 12.3(a) and 23.1 (b))

[ ] publication of the international application (under Rule 12.4(a))

[ ] international preliminary examination (Rules 55.2(a) and/or 55.3(a))

2. With regard to the **elements** of the international application, this report is based on *(replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report)*:

[ ] the international application as originally filed/furnished

[X] the description:

pages **1, 4-5** as originally filed/furnished
pages* **2, 3, 3a** received by this Authority on **19 September 2005** with the letter of **the same date**
pages* received by this Authority on with the letter of

[X] the claims:

pages as originally filed/furnished
pages* as amended (together with any statement) under Article 19
pages* **6-8** received by this Authority on **19 September 2005** with the letter of **the same date**
pages* received by this Authority on with the letter of

[X] the drawings:

pages **1** as originally filed/furnished
pages* received by this Authority on with the letter of
pages* received by this Authority on with the letter of

[ ] a sequence listing and/or any related table(s) - see Supplemental Box Relating to Sequence Listing.

3. [ ] The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

[ ] the description, pages
[ ] the claims, Nos.
[ ] the drawings, sheets/figs
[ ] the sequence listing *(specify)*:
[ ] any table(s) related to the sequence listing *(specify)*:

4. [ ] This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments annexed to this report and listed below had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed, as indicated in the Supplemental Box (Rule 70.2(c)).

[ ] the description, pages
[ ] the claims, Nos.
[ ] the drawings, sheets/figs
[ ] the sequence listing *(specify)*:
[ ] any table(s) related to the sequence listing *(specify)*:

* *If item 4 applies, some or all of those sheets may be marked "superseded."*

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY REPORT ON PATENTABILITY

International application No.
PCT/AU2005/000304

Box No. V **Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement**

1. Statement

Novelty (N)	Claims	**1-15**	**YES**
	Claims		**NO**
Inventive step (IS)	Claims	**1-15**	**YES**
	Claims		**NO**
Industrial applicability (IA)	Claims	**1-15**	**YES**
	Claims		**NO**

2. Citations and explanations (Rule 70.7)

US 2003/0216165

CA 2399931

US 6155925

EP 1063622

All claims are novel and involve an inventive step over the cited art. None of the citations, alone, or in obvious combination, disclose, or fairly suggest, all features of claims 1-15.

In particular, the cited documents do not teach variable state scatter symbols, as defined in all the independent claims.

Summary of the Invention

In a broad form, the present invention provides a method of providing a jackpot, in which the jackpot is triggered by symbols scattered across the screen and not confined to a payline.

According to one aspect, the present invention provides a method of providing a jackpot in a gaming machine, said machine having multiple simulated reels, and at least one payline, including at least the steps of:

a) determining a player's wager;

b) playing the game, so that the simulated reels assume a specific configuration showing symbols across said reels, wherein one or more of said symbols can be a scatter symbol, wherein one or more of said scatter symbols can be a variable state scatter symbol, said variable state being either an active state, whereby said variable state scatter symbol acts as a scatter symbol, or an inactive state, whereby said variable state scatter symbol is not considered to be a scatter symbol, wherein the probability of a variable state scatter symbol having an active state is dependent upon the size of the player's wager; and

c) determining if scatter symbols appear across said reels in a predefined manner, and if so then paying said jackpot.

As the probability that each variable state scatter symbol is active is independent of how many scatter symbols are present, this provides a simple, scalable way of ensuring linearity.

According to another aspect, the present invention provides a gaming machine having multiple simulated reels, said machine including a processor, player wager selection means and a display, and at least one payline, the processor playing a game in accordance with software, the game including the steps of:

a) receiving a player's wager from the wager selection means;

b) playing the game, so that the simulated reels are displayed, on said display, in a specific configuration showing symbols across said reels, wherein one or more of said symbols can be a scatter symbol, wherein one or more of said scatter symbols can be a variable state scatter symbol, said variable state being either an active state, whereby said variable state scatter symbol acts as a scatter symbol, or an inactive state, whereby said variable state scatter symbol is

not considered to be a scatter symbol, wherein the probability of a variable state scatter symbol having an active state is dependent upon the size of the player's wager; and

c) determining if scatter symbols appear across said reels in a predefined manner, and if so then paying said jackpot.

Whilst the present invention may be implemented on a single machine, it is preferably implemented as a linked jackpot arrangement. In a preferred form, each gaming machine determines the outcome of individual game play locally, while contributing incremental credits to a central system. The jackpot amount and payouts are managed by the central system. The system may accordingly be managed centrally in essentially the same way as a conventional symbol driven jackpot system. The linked machines may be all on one site, or on linked sites, both of which are widely practiced for conventional linked jackpot systems.

As games and game types have evolved, different pay methods have been introduced to make games more exciting. One of the most popular is the scatter pay that does not require paylines to reward a player. In a scatter game, the appearance of the scatter symbols anywhere on the screen or in a pre-determined directional pattern (left to right, right to left, adjacent) pays a prize multiplied by the players total bet. The scatter feature is generally an addition to payline based games. The present invention awards a jackpot, or the chance to win a jackpot, based on a scatter combination. This is a game feature which has not previously been used to award a jackpot.

One of the keys to devising linearity formats is to ensure players understand how they are potentially being rewarded. As scatters are now an accepted form of paying combination, this invention takes the simple scatter pay and adds another dimension that retains the existing method of awarding prizes, but introduces another element that is over and above the standard slot game.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The present invention would be described with reference to the accompanying figure 1, which is an illustration of relevant reel symbols for an implementation of the present invention.

Detailed Description

It will be understood that there are a variety of ways to implement the present invention. The present invention may be readily implemented as an

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method of providing a jackpot in a gaming machine, said machine having multiple simulated reels, and at least one payline, including at least the steps of:

a) determining a player's wager;

b) playing the game, so that the simulated reels assume a specific configuration showing symbols across said reels, wherein one or more of said symbols can be a scatter symbol, wherein one or more of said scatter symbols can be a variable state scatter symbol, said variable state being either an active state, whereby said variable state scatter symbol acts as a scatter symbol, or an inactive state, whereby said variable state scatter symbol is not considered to be a scatter symbol, wherein the probability of a variable state scatter symbol having an active state is dependent upon the size of the player's wager; and

c) determining if scatter symbols appear across said reels in a predefined manner, and if so then paying said jackpot.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the probability of winning the jackpot based upon the scatter symbols is linearly dependant upon the size of the player's wager relative to a maximum possible wager.

3. A method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the inactive variable state scatter symbol is operative for non-jackpot game play.

4. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the wherein the probability of a variable state scatter symbol having an active state is dependant upon the size of the player's wager relative to a maximum possible wager.

5. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the jackpot is accumulated across a plurality of linked machines.

6. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the jackpot is accumulated on a single machine.

7. A method of awarding a jackpot in a simulated reels gaming machine, wherein dependant upon the configuration of reels after game play, one or more reels may include active scatter symbols, and one reel may include a set of symbols which selectively form active or inactive scatter symbols, the jackpot being won by a predetermined combination of active scatter symbols in a game outcome display including one on the said one reel, wherein the probability that a scatter symbol is selected as active on the game outcome display is dependant upon the size of the player's wager relative to a maximum possible wager for the machine.

8. A system for operating a linked jackpot, comprising at least a plurality of gaming machines linked to a central jackpot controller, said central jackpot controller and said machines cooperating to implement the method according to any one of claim 1 to 5.

9. A gaming machine having multiple simulated reels, said machine including a processor, player wager selection means and a display, and at least one payline, the processor playing a game in accordance with software, the game including the steps of:

a) receiving a player's wager from the wager selection means;

b) playing the game, so that the simulated reels are displayed, on said display, in a specific configuration showing symbols across said reels, wherein one or more of said symbols can be a scatter symbol, wherein one or more of said scatter symbols can be a variable state scatter symbol, said variable state being either an active state, whereby said variable state scatter symbol acts as a scatter symbol, or an inactive state, whereby said variable state scatter symbol is not considered to be a scatter symbol, wherein the probability of a variable state scatter symbol having an active state is dependent upon the size of the player's wager; and

c) determining if scatter symbols appear across said reels in a predefined manner, and if so then paying said jackpot.

10. A gaming machine according to claim 9, wherein the probability of winning the jackpot based upon the scatter symbols is linearly dependant upon the size of the player's wager relative to a maximum possible wager.

11. A gaming machine according to claim 9 or claim 10, wherein the inactive variable state scatter symbol is operative for non-jackpot game play.

12. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 9 to 11, wherein the probability of a variable state scatter symbol having an active state is dependant upon the size of the player's wager relative to a maximum possible wager.

13. A system for operating a linked jackpot game, comprising at least a plurality of gaming machines according to any one of claims 9 to 12, said gaming machines being linked to a central jackpot controller, said central jackpot controller and said machines cooperating to provide a pooled jackpot incremented from wagers on all of said gaming machines.

14. A gaming machine having multiple simulated reels, said machine including a processor, player wager selection means and a display, and at least one payline, the processor playing a game in accordance with software, wherein dependant upon the configuration of reels after game play, one or more reels may include active scatter symbols, and one reel may include a set of symbols which selectively form active or inactive scatter symbols, the jackpot being won by a predetermined combination of active scatter symbols in a game outcome display including one on the said one reel, wherein the probability that a scatter symbol is selected as active on the game outcome display is dependant upon the size of the player's wager relative to a maximum possible wager for the machine.

15. A computer software product, adapted to implement the method of any one of claims 1 to 7.